Met Office

January 2009

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1971-2000.

UK overview

Mean temperatures over most of the UK were generally below the 1971-2000 normal and around 1.5°C below across much of southern England. Temperatures in Scotland were closer to average, with northern Scotland around 0.5 °C above normal. It was the coldest January since 1997 for England and Wales and since 2001 for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Rainfall was close to average in most areas. Sunshine was above normal across most of the UK, particularly over Wales and the far north of Scotland.

Achnagart (Highland) recorded a maximum temperature of 15.6 °C on 11th. Alwen (Clwyd) recorded a minimum temperature of -12.4 °C on 7th. Wet Sledale Reservoir (Cumbria) recorded 139.2mm of rainfall on 11th. A wind gust of 93 mph was recorded at Capel Curig (Gwynnedd) on 17th.

England diary of highlights

The first 10 days were mostly dry but very cold with some unusually prolonged and severe frosts. Thereafter, the weather became much more unsettled with rain at times. It remained generally cold, but with some brief milder interludes. Mean temperatures were below normal, especially across the south, and it was the coldest January since 1997. Rainfall was generally close to normal. Sunshine was above normal.

1st to 10th: High pressure covered the UK and much of Europe. Across England, there were variable amounts of cloud, but also clear or sunny spells. With very little wind, temperatures were able to fall away very quickly under clear skies to bring some unusually severe frosts. Temperatures locally fell below -10 °C on some nights and the lowest temperatures were across the south on the morning of the 7th with -12.3 °C at Buntingford (Hertfordshire), -11.8 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire) and -11.1 °C at Hurn (Dorset). There was also fog on many mornings, this lingering all day in places, and the combination of hard frost and fog gave some spectacular riming on trees etc.

11th to 16th: High pressure declined southeastwards into Europe, and with low pressure becoming dominant over the Atlantic, south-westerly winds brought in milder air. The change was slow across the far south-east, but in the west it was much milder by the 12th with temperatures locally above 10 °C. There was also rain, some being heavy and prolonged; Shap (Cumbria) recorded 100 mm on 11th. However, the nights were generally frost-free, but there was a widespread sharp frost on the morning of the 14th. Between bands of rain, there was some sunshine. Winds were occasionally strong, especially in the west.

17th to 18th: This was perhaps the most disturbed spell of the month as a very deep area of low pressure moved northwards to the west of Scotland. It became very windy later on the 17th and into the 18th, and gales were quite widespread, especially in the west. A gust of 80 m.p.h. was reported from the Seven Stones Lighthouse off the Isles of Scilly, and there were reports of fallen trees across parts of south-west England. A band of squally rain and hail also moved through on the evening of the 17th, bringing a temporary covering of hail to some areas.

19th to 21st: Colder westerly winds brought a mixture of clear or sunny spells and scattered wintry showers. Some of the showers were heavy, especially near western and southern coasts, but some central and eastern areas remained dry and quite sunny, but with sharp overnight frosts. On the morning of the 21st, showers were

quickly followed by a frost, and roads across south-west England especially became very icy with some having to be closed for a time.

22nd to 29th: More typical January weather occurred during this period. Areas of low pressure moving eastwards across the UK brought very unsettled conditions to the whole of England. Some of the rain was heavy, bringing localised flooding to some areas, and winds were occasionally strong. Between the bands of rain, there were some spells of sunshine, but also a scattering of showers.

30th to 31st: High pressure built strongly to the north-east of the UK with a ridge extending across England. Rain across some western areas was pushed away westwards with easterly winds developing. However, these became progressively colder, especially on the 31st when they increased to become strong in many places.

Wales diary of highlights

The first 10 days were mostly dry but very cold with were some unusually prolonged and severe frosts. Thereafter, it became much more unsettled with rain at times. It remained generally rather cold, but with some brief mild interludes. Mean temperatures were below normal, and it was the coldest January since 1997. Sunshine duration was well above normal; it was the 7th sunniest January in the series.

1st to 10th: High pressure covered the UK and much of Europe. Across Wales, there were variable amounts of cloud, allowing some clear or sunny spells. With very little wind, temperatures were able to fall very quickly under clear skies to bring some unusually severe frosts, given the lack of snow cover. Temperatures were lowest across the south on the morning of the 7th, with -10.4 °C at Pembrey Sands (Carmarthenshire). There was also fog on many mornings, this lingering all day in some places.

11th to 16th: High pressure declined southeastwards into Europe, and with low pressure becoming dominant over the Atlantic, south-westerly winds brought in milder air such that in the west it was much milder by the 12th, with temperatures locally above 10 °C. There was also rain, and some of this was heavy and prolonged; 83 mm was recorded at Capel Curig (Conwy) on 11th. The nights were generally frost-free, but there was a widespread sharp frost on the morning of the 14th. Between bands of rain, there was some sunshine. Winds were occasionally strong, especially in the west.

17th to 18th: This was perhaps the most disturbed spell of the month as a very deep area of low pressure moved northwards to the west of Scotland. It became very windy later on the 17th and into the 18th, and gales were quite widespread, especially in the west and there were reports of fallen trees in parts of the south and west. A gust of 93 m.p.h.was recorded at Capel Curig during the evening of the 17th. A band of squally rain and hail also moved through in the early evening of the 17th, bringing a temporary covering of hail to some areas.

19th to 21st: Colder westerly winds brought a mixture of clear or sunny spells and scattered wintry showers. Some of the showers were heavy, especially near western coasts, but some eastern areas remained dry and quite sunny, but with sharp overnight frosts. On the morning of the 21st, showers were quickly followed by a frost, with some roads becoming icy for a time.

22nd to 29th: More typical January weather occurred during this time. Areas of low pressure moving eastwards across the UK brought very unsettled conditions to the whole of Wales during this period. Some of the rain was heavy, bringing localised flooding, and winds were occasionally strong. Between the bands of rain, there were some spells of sunshine, but also a scattering of showers.

30th to 31st: High pressure built strongly to the north-east of the UK, with a ridge extending across Wales. Rain across western areas was pushed away westwards, with easterly winds developing. However, these became progressively colder, especially on the 31st when they increased to become strong in many places.

Scotland diary of highlights

An initial very cold spell, followed by alternating mild and cold periods. Mean temperatures and rainfall were close to average but sunshine was generally well above average, especially in the north. It was the 8th sunniest January in the series and the sunniest since 2001.

1st to 9th: The 1st to the 3rd were cold and cloudy with daytime temperatures only a little above freezing and a few wintry showers across the north and east. Continuing cold and cloudy through the 4th with a more prolonged spell of rain and hill snow, clearer in the north and east during the evening. The 5th was brighter with early and late frosts with-10.9 °C at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire) overnight. The 6th was cloudy with patchy rain, freezing rain, sleet and snow. The 7th was cloudy and misty, while Shetland had some snow. The 8th and 9th were cloudy and breezy over the northwest and the Isles with some drizzle. Elsewhere dry with clear or sunny spells and night frost, Aboyne dipping to -8.3 °Cearly on the 9th.

10th to 17th: The 10th was unsettled with heavy rain and strong southwest winds. A gust to 75 m.p.h. was recorded at Stornoway airport. Another very wet day for western Scotland on 11th with Tyndrum (Stirlingshire) recording 65 mm in 24 hours to 9pm. Also gale force winds with severe gales in the northwest. However, it was mild, with temperatures of 14 °C at places near the north-west coast including 15.6 °C at Achnagart (Highland). The 12th and 13th were less windy with frequent showers, wintry on hills, in the north and west, drier and brighter elsewhere. A bright start on 14th in the east but it clouded over with rain preceded by sleet and snow spread from west. Becoming windy with gales in the west. Bands of rain and strong winds spread northeast on the 15th. The 16th and 17th were windy with sunshine and showers. Severe gales developed later on the 17th, particularly in the west and north, with South Uist recording a gust to 98 m.p.h. in the evening.

18th to 26th: Lighter winds on 18th but colder with wintry showers. On 19th a band of rain, sleet or snow moving north-eastwards with snow causing a temporary closure of Edinburgh Airport. Wintry showers on 20th , then mainly dry and bright on the 21st although still with a few wintry showers. A band of rain cleared eastwards on 22nd followed by scattered showers. Bright, sunny or clear on the 23rd with showers, these falling as snow across the hills. A clear and frosty start on the 24th, then sunny day. Wintry showers in the north-west. Rain, sleet and snow pushed north on 25th, followed by clear spells with showers in the west. Dry and bright on 26th after a frosty start in the east. Rain edged into the west coast during evening.

27th to 30th: Showers affected the west coast on 27th with rain in the south for much of the day. Drier elsewhere with sunshine in the north-east. Showers in the north-west on the 28th, elsewhere dry and bright. Cloudy with patchy rain for most on 29th although sunny across the north-west Highlands, with strong to gale force south-east winds. Cloudy with outbreaks of rain on the 30th, again with strong winds.

31st: Rain cleared westwards then mild and sunny in the west, but colder in the east with a raw south-easterly wind.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Dry at first, with overnight frost and fog before turning milder with rain or showers. Becoming colder after mid-month before becoming a little milder again but wet. Mean temperatures were below normal and it was the coldest January since 2001. Rainfall and sunshine were above normal and it was the sunniest January since 2003.

1st to 9th: The 1st to the 5th were cloudy but mainly dry with local overnight frosts. The 6th was sunny, cold and clear with a widespread frost after dark, with the temperature at Katesbridge (Co Down) falling to -7.7 °C. Much cloudier on the 7th but mainly dry. Fog on the 8th cleared, and it was sunny in east, cloudier in west. Sunny on the 9th after early frost.

10th to 17th: The 10th was milder with outbreaks of rain and strong south-west winds. Milder still on 11th with a temperature of 13.4 °C at Ballykelly (Co Londonderry), but also cloudy with rain and strong south-west winds. Cooler with sunny spells on the 12th and 13th with a few showers. A bright start in east on the 14th

then cloud and rain spread from the west. Rain cleared to bright spells and showers on the 15th and 16th when it was mild and breezy. The 17th started dry and bright before rain and severe gales developed in the afternoon; Orlock Head (Co Down) recorded a gust of 74 m.p.h.

18th to 26th: The 18th was colder with sunny intervals and wintry showers. The 19th and 20th were cold with wintry showers. Clouding over on 21st with outbreaks of rain. A bright day on the 22nd with scattered showers in west. Bright, sunny or clear on the 23rd with showers, wintry on high ground. Mainly dry and sunny on 24th then windy with rain in the evening. Rain cleared northwards on 25th, followed by sunny/clear spells and isolated showers. The 26th was mainly dry with some sunshine, then cloudy with rain during the evening.

27th to 31st: The 27th was cloudy with patchy rain in the east, brighter weather in the west. The 28th was dry with sunny spells after early patchy fog and frost lifted. A generally cloudy, mild day on the 29th with outbreaks of rain, especially in the afternoon, and strong winds. Cloudy on 30th with wind and rain, heavy at times and very persistent. A very wet start to the day on 31st but then it became drier with some brightness.

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